

CLARKE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
March 11, 2004 Budget Work Session 7:00 p.m.
General District Courtroom

At a Board of Supervisors Work Session held on Thursday, March 11, 2004 at 7:00 pm in the General District Courtroom of the General District Courthouse, Berryville, Virginia.

Present

Chairman Staelin, Vice Chairman Hobert, Supervisor Dunning, Supervisor Byrd, Supervisor Weiss

Also Present

Tom Judge, David L. Ash, William Houck, Bent Ferrell, Gary Hornbaker, Caren Leach, Michael McCall, Eleanor Smalley, Ed Breslauer, Rick Catlett, John Lyttle, Michael Graff, Robert Allen and other citizens and members of the press

Call To Order

Chairman Staelin called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the General District Courtroom of the General District Courthouse. School Board Chair William Houck reconvened the School Board meeting shortly thereafter.

School Board Presentation

Dr. William Houck presented the school budget for fiscal year 2005. Dr. Houck first reviewed operating expenses stating that the School Board had kept to the 5% cap on spending increases. He briefly reviewed the increases in retirement, health insurances and the proposed salary increases.

Dr. Houck invited Andrew Kiser, Clarke County Education Association Chair, to speak to the Board of Supervisors regarding the salary increase requested by their group. Mr. Kiser thanked the Boards for the opportunity to speak. He stated that the Association had kept the school construction resolution in mind when developing their proposal for salary increases for teachers, bus drivers and other school staff members. He expressed his concern with the State's inability to come to a decision regarding funding for the coming fiscal year. He opined that salaries and health benefits were important but they understood that the "pie was only so big" as had been put forth by Chairman Staelin at the January 20, 2004 meeting on the joint resolution for school construction funding. Mr. Kiser reviewed the rises in health cost over the last two years, which have had a significant impact on wages. He told the Boards they would appreciate anything they could do to implement the proposed 3% salary increase.

Chairman Staelin thanked Mr. Kiser for working with Richmond on education funding and extended the Board's appreciation of his efforts.

Dr. Houck stated that the School Board believed that salary increases were important. He explained how they proposed to fund a 3% salary increase. Dr. Smalley stated that they intended to reduce cost through attrition and restructuring staff to maximize efficiencies and better utilize existing staff. Dr. Smalley said the number of teachers scheduled to retire at the end of fiscal year 2004 was the largest during her tenure. She postulated that the upcoming year would be a training year with Clarke County schools joining in a consortium with Frederick County and the City of Winchester to provide new teacher orientation.

There was discussion regarding the General Assembly and the impact of their decisions on the local budget. It was agreed that if the schools did receive the full amount from the State that it would lessen the impact on funds from the locality. Gary Hornbaker stated that the School Board had made a commitment to hold to the 5%; even if they should receive a windfall from the State, they will continue to hold to 5%.

Supervisor Dunning opined that the general government side was “cut to the bone” and there may be tough times ahead. Vice Chairman Hobert stated that the Board of Supervisors had made a commitment to cut spending in order to fund school construction. Dr. Houck put forth that this year the School Board would hold to the 5% and stay within the formula and he expressed his belief that both Boards would work together to hold to the model.

Mr. Staelin put forth that businesses were being faced with the challenge of being more productive and reducing costs. He challenged the Boards to use the skills they had learned in their private businesses to make the County run more efficiently and to improve productivity.

Dr. Houck reviewed the capital budget for the schools. There was discussion regarding the energy improvements proposed for implementation in Clarke County schools. Dr. Smalley stated that only one contractor looked at the facilities thus far. Dr. Houck stated that the high school had been included in the estimate with the understanding that the contractor would work with the architects and the improvements would be done in conjunction with the renovation. Dr. Smalley put forth that the contractor they have worked with would write a contract guaranteeing that the energy savings will exceed the cost of installation. Supervisor Dunning suggested that Dr. Smalley get a quote from a new resident in White Post, who is in the lighting business.

Dr. Smalley reviewed the reduction in textbook costs that will come primarily from purchases of science textbooks in this fiscal year, which was made possible through the supplemental appropriation made by the Board during fiscal year 2004.

There was discussion regarding loans for improving access at Johnson Williams Middle School. Loan options will be discussed further at the Joint Administrative Services Board scheduled for Monday, March 22.

Dr. Smalley explained that three buses were scheduled for replacement. In efforts to hold down cost in previous years, the schools have fallen behind in their preferred 12-year replacement schedule. She also explained that safety audits are required at the schools during which a need for greater security on all entrances and exists was identified. Doors and locks will be replaced, bars lowered for handicap access and entrances to the high school will be limited to three.

Carpet replacement is proposed for Berryville Primary and the High School Library. Supervisor Byrd inquired about a donation of carpeting to the schools by one of her constituents. Dr. Smalley stated that the carpeting had been placed in the trailers and asked Mrs. Byrd to convey her gratitude for the gift. Supervisor Byrd said that she would pass along the information and apprise the Boards that she had been told there was more free carpeting available if there was a need.

Chairman Staelin briefly reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule for fiscal year 2005 budget discussions.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Chairman Staelin adjourned the meeting at 8:13 pm.

Next Meeting Date:

The next Board of Supervisors meeting is set for March 16, 2004, at 9:00 am in the Board of Supervisor's Meeting Room, Second Floor of the Circuit Courthouse, 102 N. Church Street, Berryville, Virginia.

ATTEST: March 11, 2004

John Staelin, Chairman

David L. Ash, County Administrator